

**Council on Postsecondary Education
Executive Committee
March 8, 2006**

Statewide Diversity Study Status Report

At its July 18, 2005, meeting the Council on Postsecondary Education adopted the recommendation of its Committee on Equal Opportunities (CEO) that the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the public postsecondary institutions, conduct an environmental scan (diversity study) to determine its compelling state interest, if any, to engage in diversity planning. An RFP has been prepared and is being reviewed by institutions before being issued by the Council to conduct the study.

The CEO began the process of developing a new statewide plan in June 2004. The institutional presidents appointed representatives to work with the Council staff during the planning process. The workgroup solicited information from experts to be used in developing a request for proposals to conduct the diversity study. Advice was sought from officials at the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, and others regarding their experience with conducting statewide diversity studies.

The purpose of the diversity study is to examine and determine how to best structure policies and practices to maximize participation, access, and success for underrepresented minority groups in the Commonwealth. The study will ultimately determine whether the Commonwealth should continue its focus specifically on Kentucky resident African Americans or include other groups. Since Kentucky began its equal opportunity planning at the public postsecondary institutions, the focus has remained on one group, Kentucky resident African Americans, to remove remaining vestiges of de jure segregation that impacted their enrollment, retention, and graduation for many years. The CEO agreed to continue the current plan until the Office for Civil Rights informs Kentucky of its status under the Partnership Agreement.

Project Status and Next Steps:

1. On February 21, institutions were asked to review the final draft request for proposals, confirm their commitment to participate in the study, and confirm their institutional representative to complete the evaluation of proposals.
2. It is anticipated that the RPF will be issued March 10, 2006, with selection of a vendor by July 2006.
3. As of March 1, four institutions have confirmed their participation in the study.
4. Absent confirmation by all institutions, the study may have to be postponed indefinitely. The Commonwealth cannot engage in diversity planning unless it can prove, based on the findings of the U. S. Supreme Court in the University of Michigan decisions, a compelling state interest for doing so.
5. The study, if undertaken, is expected to be completed and a final report given to the Council and institutions by June 30, 2007.